BIG JACK

THE STORY OF A HORSE

Gabrielle E. Jackson



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BIG JACK



"Jack"

BIG JACK

And

Other True Stories *of* Horses

By

GABRIELLE E. JACKSON

Author of

"LITTLE COMRADE,"

"THE COLBURN PRIZE,"

"LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE," ETC.



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Gabrielle E. Jackson

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BIG JACK

"BIG JACK"

I WONDER how many of the little people in New York City have ever heard of "Big Jack"? Not many, I fancy; and yet Big Jack is quite an important character, and holds a very responsible position, which he fills with much dignity as well as credit to himself, and satisfaction to his employers.

His headquarters are at Broadway and Twenty-second Street, where he can usually be found at about ten o'clock in the morning, and from that hour, off and on, until about 5 P. M. In the intervals his business affairs call him to various parts of the city, but being extremely methodical in his habits, he is usually at his office about lunch-time.

You may be somewhat surprised to learn that he is strictly a vegetarian, confining his diet solely to cereals or fruit, with occasionally a few lumps of sugar. He *should* have been a Scotchman, judging by his fondness for oats, but he was born, I am told, in our own country.

Possibly his love for oats may account for his beautiful complexion, which is snowy white, with just a suggestion of pink showing through and telling of the warm, rich blood flowing underneath.

I first became acquainted with Jack about five years ago. Indeed, I must confess that we *scraped* acquaintance. It came about in this manner. I was standing with my little daughter upon the corner of Broadway and Twenty-second Street, waiting for an uptown car, when I became aware that we were being very closely regarded by a pair of unusually large and extremely beautiful brown eyes—eyes which were very eloquent,

and seemed to say much more plainly than words could have done: "I am very favorably impressed with that little girl, and I should like to know her. Will she speak to me, do you think?"

I called the little girl's attention to the big eyes looking at her so steadfastly, and, do you know, I believe she understood their language even better than I did, and yet I flatter myself that I am a pretty good interpreter of such glances. At any rate, she walked straight up to their owner and said: "Why do you look at me that-a-way? I just guess you *know* I keep lumps of sugar in my pocket to give to great, big lovely horses like you!"

Slowly a great white head with the most intelligent eyes I have ever seen was lowered to a level with the little maid's face, and two or three queer, sidling steps taken to bring it closer to the outstretched arms. The owner seemed to realize that those little

arms never gave any save the tenderest caresses, and he was very glad to feel one circle around his huge, soft neck, while the other carried a small hand to stroke a very silky muzzle, for Big Jack is a horse among horses. And big, indeed, he is—a giant of his kind.

There is nothing small about Jack either in his make-up or his manners. His head is massive, but magnificently formed, with thin, sensitive nostrils, wide-awake eyes placed widely apart, small, alert ears which point forward, or occasionally one is turned back as though to listen round the corner for the sound of a familiar voice, or a kindly word from his driver, who is justly proud of the big white creature.

And such a neck! I would not dare venture a guess as to the size of collar Jack wears, for the great neck arches up to a crest that is truly noble.

But his eyes tell more of his noble nature

than all the rest of the head together; they are so big, so soft, so brown, and so eloquent. With them he talks to you, expressing by them love, kindness, expectancy, joy, and—sometimes—make-believe anger, for Jack is rarely angry in earnest.

But he resents the slightest approach to teasing by flashing his big eyes at his tormentor, and after they have seen the sharp eyes turned so keenly on them, not many have the hardihood to push matters too far.

Big Jack has hosts of friends, who always have a kind word for him, and a day rarely passes without someone bringing him a dainty of some sort.

His driver carries him an apple every morning when he goes to the stable to take him out for his day's work, and Jack knows exactly the hour to expect him, and the instant his foot-fall is heard, greets him with a loud whinny.

After Jack has enjoyed his apple, his master lets him out of his stall, and that is Jack's opportunity for a frolic. He prances about like a young colt until told to "go along and get his drink," when he at once marches off to the water-trough and proceeds to drink up a few gallons. A good breakfast follows, and then he puts himself in position to be harnessed, gets into his shafts, and is ready for business. He knows exactly what is expected of him, and trots straight to the express office at Twenty-second Street and Broadway.

Jack does not move rapidly; it is not compatible with his size and dignity to do so, for he seems to realize his importance and to understand how utterly impossible it would be for the company to conduct the express business without his valuable assistance.

In front of his office Jack is king, and woe to any other horse who tries to usurp

his special post. He knows precisely how that wagon should be backed in to the sidewalk to receive its daily load, and does not rest until he has brought it to exactly the proper position.

Then he settles down for a nap, and no one would imagine that the big white horse standing there with his head hanging down and eyes partly closed had half an ounce of sense in his great head. But stand aside for a few moments and watch him. Presently you see one ear turned slowly backward for apparently no cause at all. But Jack knows more than you do, and that ear is sharp, and has heard the patter of familiar feet and the sound of a sweet little voice. He cannot see behind him because, long ago, some stupid man, who thought he knew more about horses' needs and natures than He who created them, decreed that they must wear a great patch of leather on each side of their heads in order that they may not know what

is happening behind them; and *blinders* they are indeed.

But he did not stop up their *ears,* and Jack has that to be thankful for.

That pretty ear has heard a voice it recognizes, and when it has told its possessor that the owner of that voice is near enough to be seen, slowly the great head is raised and turned the least little bit to the right side, and the eyes, but a moment since so dull and sleepy,—so oblivious of surrounding affairs,—begin to beam with a wonderful softness.

Now comes dancing along a little girl about four years of age, with brown curls waving and brown eyes sparkling. A little girl who *never* walks; she skips and she prances, she jumps and she dances, as she holds her mother's hand, and, I had better add, she chatters incessantly.

No wonder Jack has heard her. She comes up from behind him very quietly and

says softly, "Good-morning, dear old Jack!"

Jack hitches a step or two closer to the sidewalk and waits; for Jack is a sly old fellow, and he knows it would never do to turn too quickly, and so spoil this pleasant little game of peek-a-boo.

"Who loves sugar, and how many lumps have I in my pocket for somebody?"

The word "sugar" has broken the charm, and Jack can no longer resist. The big, soft head comes down to the little girl's outstretched arms and snuggles close up to her —so close that one passing by stops to say, "Oh, that horse will surely hurt that child."

But Big Jack and Wee Winkles understand each other too well, and the great creature's gentleness is a very beautiful lesson.

"Now, Jack," she continues, "before we can have any sugar we must shake hands."

Hardly are the words uttered when up

comes a monstrous right foot, which two small hands grasp at the slender ankle; for to hold the hoof itself would be somewhat like trying to hold half a ton.

"That's a dear horse. Now, find the buttons on my coat,—a lump of sugar for each button, you know."

Very gently the soft muzzle travels up the front of the little coat, and a sly nip is given to the top button. The reward is instantly offered, and crunched with a relish. Before it has had time to slip down the huge throat, Jack has found the second button, and won his second lump. Four buttons in all, and four lumps of sugar.

A few more loving pats upon the dear old nose, the assurance that she "loves him *dearly, dearly,*" and Wee Winkles prances away up Broadway to Madison Square for her morning airing, while Jack watches her until she is lost in the throng.

Nearly every day, during the winter

months in town for almost two years, Jack was visited, and no matter how long a time elapsed during the summer, when his little friend was out of town, Jack never forgot her, but upon her return showed his delight in every possible way.

But at length came a long separation, for the little girl moved far away uptown, where she lived for two years, and then moved to the country, and Big Jack was seen no longer. We often wondered whether he missed his morning visitor and lumps of sugar, but concluded that several other children, who knew and loved him, would doubtless remember him. Not only children loved Jack, but grown people find something very fascinating in the great creature, who is by turns affectionate or mischievous, and seems to act toward his friends with remarkable discrimination, showing to some all that is gentlest and sweetest—and this usually to the little

people—in his disposition, and to others his mischief.

To see Jack dissemble is too funny for words to express. He will pretend he does not know a friend is near him until that friend slips his hand into his pocket for the apple or sugar which Jack knows all the time is there. Then he will turn his head slowly, very slowly, toward the individual, who may have been standing there for the past two minutes,—time is of no value to Jack,—then a quiet, scarcely perceptible change in the position of the ears, a surprised opening of the eyes, as though to say: "Why, really, are *you* there? I *am* surprised! I had no idea that you were within half a mile. *So* pleased to see you!"

Then the sweet morsel is accepted in the most gracious manner imaginable, as though his lordship were conferring a great favor by condescending to accept the attention.

And now I must tell you something which seems almost too wonderful to be true. After a lapse of five years we can tell a tale of Jack's intelligence which is truly extraordinary, and which proves conclusively, if, indeed, the fact ever could be doubted, that our dumb friend has a memory which some of his two-footed friends might envy.

Not long since his little friend, now grown a large girl of nine years, went with her mother to the city to do some shopping, and, turning into Twenty-second Street from Sixth Avenue, the first object which met her eyes was Big Jack standing in front of one of the shops.

Although five years have passed over Jack's head since we first met him,—and that is quite a number as horses' lives are counted,—they have dealt very gently with him, and he is but little changed. Not quite so sleek, perhaps, and not so kittenish, for Jack has worked hard and steadily all

these years, and work tells even upon the strongest horses; but the same old Jack stood before us, and could not be mistaken.

We were behind him, and his blinders prevented him from seeing us.

"Oh, mamma," said his little friend, "do you think he will remember me if I speak to him? How I wish we had some sugar for the dear old fellow!"

I replied that we would step into a store close at hand and get a few lumps, and then we would test Jack's memory. We soon had our sugar, and Wee Winkles—no longer "wee"—walked up from behind him as of old, and said in the voice which Jack had not heard for nearly four years, and which naturally must have changed considerably in that interval: "Good-morning, dear old Jack!" To my great astonishment, the recognition was instantaneous. Quick as a flash the great head was turned; and not only that, but a soft whinny told

of the dear old fellow's joy, as did also the quick snuggling down to the outstretched arms.

No one could possibly doubt these demonstrations of delight; and when they were followed by the voluntary upraising of the huge fore foot, as of old, for the—what shall I say—foot-shake? his little friend's joy knew no bounds.

"Oh, mamma, mamma," she cried, "did you *ever* know anything so wonderful?"

I replied that it was indeed very remarkable, and added, "Can it be possible that he has remembered all the tricks? Ask him about the s-u-g-a-r"—spelling the word lest the sound might recall the trick of the buttons.

"Who loves sugar, and how many lumps have I in my pocket for somebody?"

But, alas! fashions have changed in four years, and some coats have no buttons at all. In vain poor Jack felt about for the

top button, then a little lower for where No. 2 should have been found, then at the other side for three and four, but no buttons were there; and Jack, utterly disgusted, manifested it by shaking his head and stamping his foot. His surprise was absurdly funny, and if he could have spoken I believe he would have said with withering scorn: "Well, if *I* were in *your* place I'd go straight home and *sew on my buttons!*"

Jack, however, got his four lumps despite the fashions, and was a very happy horse.

It is perhaps rather difficult to believe this little tale, but it is absolutely true from beginning to end, and has been written in order to give the little people who reside in that section of New York an opportunity to see and know big Jack, for I do assure you he is well worth seeing and knowing.

There are, I dare say, a great many very clever and very beautiful horses in our big city. Indeed, Wee Winkles and I know

several ourselves. "Billy Borden," for instance, who knows his milk route so well that his driver has only to say, "8 West Sixty-sixth, Billy," or "9 West Sixty-fifth, Billy," to have him go at once to these addresses, or any other with which he is familiar. Again, he will say: "No milk here to-day, Billy," and Billy jogs on.

Then there is "Dan Sorrel," who draws the milk-wagon which takes the milk to Central Park Dairy every morning. His driver often amuses the children who gather about his pet by saying:

"Now, Dan, I believe you are a Democrat."

"No!" shakes the head.

"What! a Republican?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" and a stamping of both front feet, while the tail is slashed about like a banner to emphasize his sentiments.

Dan is great fun. Nor must we forget our old pet "Jingo" of the mounted police-

men's horses; for he was truly wonderful, and I might go on almost endlessly telling of his remarkable sagacity and cleverness.

Jingo and Wee Winkles were warm friends, for Winkles spent two winters in a home very near the West Seventy-second Street entrance to the Park, and each sunshiny day carried her lump of sugar to Jingo, who would perform all sorts of tricks in order to win his reward. He would waltz, go down upon his knees, shake hands, fetch a pocket-handkerchief which she made believe she had dropped, whisper in his rider's ear, and do many things besides.

It is a never-ending source of surprise to me that so few people seem to understand the wonderful intelligence of horses, or the marvelous possibilities in developing that intelligence.

All my life I have either had horses of my own or been so fortunately situated that I might make the acquaintance of those be-

longing to others. I use the word "acquaintance" advisedly, for one *must* become acquainted, must be in sympathy with them, before they will show the best side of their horse natures.

I have frequently stopped in the street beside a horse who looked as though life had been a hard struggle for him, and whose every line of face and attitude showed a stolid endurance of the inevitable, as if fate had settled his lot beyond all power to change, and nothing remained but to endure and wait until death put an end to it all. After standing for a few moments unnoticed,—as though the poor creature were thinking within itself, "She is only one more, like all the rest, and will either pass on and take no notice of me, or say, 'Get out of the way, you brute,'"—I would say softly, but without moving, "Come here, old fellow."

At first there would not be the least

response, save, perhaps, the slight turn of an ear; but upon repeating it two or three times in exactly the same tone, the head would turn slowly toward me, and a look of surprise come into the tired eyes, as though a gentle word were a thing before unknown.

At the third repetition I have rarely failed to have the poor old nose stretched out toward me for a gentle stroke, and the neck thus brought within reach of a kind pat.

Not infrequently have I had the owner of some such unfortunate say to me, "Hi, there! Look out! That horse 'll bite ye!" and have replied, "Oh, I think not; watch him a moment, and see if I am not right."

I well recall one such instance, when I went up to intercede for a poor beast that was being cruelly lashed because it could not draw a load which was far beyond its strength.

I begged the driver to desist, which, I add to his credit, he did at once, getting down off his cart, whip in hand. As he did so I went up to the poor creature's head, and was greeted with a series of snaps and plunges, as though his tormentors had driven him nearly wild. "Don't go within tin feet av the baste!" exclaimed the man. "He'll have the head off yer."

"I hardly think so," I said, and kept straight on, speaking softly and kindly to the trembling creature, while I reached out to take him by the rein.

Up flew the head as if to avoid a blow, telling all too eloquently how often the poor muzzle had smarted from one.

But dear Mother Nature is kind, and has endowed her dumb creatures with wonderful discerning powers; so not many minutes had passed before the poor tired head was nestled close to me, and soft strokes and gentle words seemed to act as a seda-

tive upon nerves which were utterly unstrung.

The man stood by, open-mouthed. "Well, be all the powers!" said he; "the likes av that niver did I see in all me born days. I thought the baste would ate the very handle off me shovel!"

"He is better than you thought, is he not?"

"Faith, I believe ye've bewitched him," he answered.

"Yes," I said, "I have; but *you* can bewitch him in the same way if you will only try it. I wish you would."

All this is a long way from Big Jack, and we must not forget our chief character in our sympathies for his less fortunate kindred.

But I want the little people who read this to realize how much that is lovable and beautiful dear Mother Nature has put right

in our daily paths, if we will only raise our eyes to see and our voices to win it; for surely it cannot fail to help us by developing all that is best and loveliest in ourselves.

"BILLEE TAYLOR"

"BILLEE TAYLOR"

THE rays of the afternoon sunshine came peeping across the high hedge to fall aslant the closely cut lawn which sloped to the beautiful river flowing so peacefully beyond. The hedge and the great trees cast long shadows upon the soft green grass, making a marked contrast to the brilliant patches of sunshine lying between.

Crickets hopped about, singing their monotonous little songs, and insects floated in the sun's warm rays, as though enjoying a golden shower bath. Under one of the great trees and comfortably resting in a big East India lawn chair, with its back drawn close to the hedge, sat, or rather half reclined, a small person of about fifteen sum-

mers; while upon the grass beside her lay an atom of a black and tan terrier.

The afternoon was very warm and still, and the drowsy, dreamy atmosphere had evidently had its influence upon little maid and little dog, for both had slipped away into dreamland.

Four strokes ran out from the distant town clock, the distance causing the sound to be wonderfully mellowed, and, as though it were the signal for a new actor to appear upon the scene, the branches of the hedge just above the chair were pushed aside and a great head, with wonderfully soft eyes, peered through at the sleepers. It was followed by a long, gracefully arched sorrel neck, and "Billee" had introduced himself.

So gently had the hedge been parted that it scarcely rustled, and the young girl slept on undisturbed.

But the owner of the great head had his

own ideas regarding the hours which should be devoted to slumber, and four o'clock, on a beautiful summer afternoon, was *not* one of them; so he proceeded to rouse the sleepers.

"Hoo-hoo; hoo-hoo-hoo," came the soft, unspellable sound a horse makes when he greets you. But it only resulted in rousing the little terrier, who raised his head lazily and regarded the intruder with a rather surprised air.

But the horse had no notion of failing in his undertaking, and at once proceeded to adopt more energetic measures. Stretching his long neck still further through the opening in the hedge, he reached toward the sleeper, and taking very gentle hold of a stray lock of hair which fell across the back of the chair, gave it a slight pull with his soft, velvety lips, and then, as though terrified at the liberty he had taken, plunged back with a loud snort.

The pull, the snort, and the wild barking of the enraged little terrier produced such an instantaneous effect that he should have been highly gratified, for the girl bounded out of her chair and stood staring at the hedge in astonishment. But that looked innocent enough, and she would have turned elsewhere to learn the cause of her fright had she not caught sight of a shining pair of eyes which looked at her through the opening in the branches.

She darted forward with a laugh, and parting the branches, she said:

"You scamp! What do you mean by playing me such a trick? I've tried to coax you to come close to me time and time again when I've been wide awake, but you choose to take me at a disadvantage while I am in the land of Nod," and she wagged her finger at him admonishingly.

Down went his head and up went his heels and tail; for a few minutes it was diffi-

cult to tell which end of him touched the ground; and no boy ever gave more pronounced demonstrations of wild delight at the success of some prank than he gave of his, as, with a final and most abandoned kick-up, he went careering over the big field. Marion, for such was the girl's name, made no attempt to coax him to come back; well knowing that he must have his fling before settling down to more serious matters, and enjoying the spectacle most thoroughly; for the horse was a beauty and never showed to greater advantage than when enjoying his freedom in the pasture.

The superb head, with its splendid eyes, delicate, pointed ears and sensitive nostrils, was held high in the air; the gracefully arched neck, with its silky, flowing mane and full throbbing veins; the dainty hoofs and slender limbs which supported the lithe, active body, appearing scarcely to touch the grass, and the long tail waving behind

like a triumphal banner, all were superbly beautiful.

But, masculine member of society as he was, he was somewhat of a coquette, and soon tried new fascinations. Stopping suddenly in the midst of his wild career, he walked over to the hedge with his head lowered as demurely as a young miss. When within about ten feet of it he stopped, threw up his head, and gave a loud neigh.

"Now you *know* you are only doing that for effect," said Marion, "and I believe you just know how beautiful you look with the sun shining on your silky, sorrel coat as you stand there trying to make me believe you're afraid, when you know perfectly well you're not one bit. Come here, this minute; for *this* time I'm determined to touch you if I have to crawl through the hedge to do it," and in another moment the girl stood in the field.

One dainty hoof pawed the ground and

the head went up and down as though answering "yes," but he did not advance a step.

"Are you coming?"

"Hoo-hoo; hoo-hoo-hoo!"

"Now does that mean 'yes' or 'no'?"

Down went the head again.

"It means 'yes,' does it? Well, come on, then," and she held out her hand coaxingly. Without a sign of warning he gave a bound which landed him beside her so suddenly that it was a marvel she did not make some demonstration of fear. But she did not, and the horse, who had a novel way of doing things, instantly made up his mind that this young lady was not easily frightened; consequently he decided to behave himself, and with a soft little whinny he put his silky head into her outstretched arms and stood as quiet as a lamb.

Marion's joy was unbounded, for, time and again during the summer she had tried

to make friends with the beautiful animal, only to find herself baffled at each attempt; and now he stood beside her and let her fondle and caress him as unreservedly as she would have caressed the little terrier, who stood beside her regarding the whole proceeding with a questioning look.

"What do you think of him, Jingles?" she asked, and the terrier gave a little bark, which set jingling the tiny silver bells upon the collar, which had given him his name.

Marion stood there caressing the horse for some time, enjoying his pranks and indulging in subdued rapture over his affectionate little demonstrations, for, once won over, he seemed determined to make amends for former shortcomings and licked her hand, nibbled at her ruffles, laid his head across her shoulder and showed in every possible way that he had taken her for his friend; when suddenly he raised his head and laid back his ears.

"What is it, old fellow? What has disturbed you?" she asked, well knowing that she was not the cause of the half-frightened, half-angry look which had come into his eyes.

Whatever it was he evidently regarded it with distinct disfavor, for his whole attitude changed and one would hardly have recognized in him the same animal which a moment before had so captivated Marion.

Up went the head and a still more frightened look crept into his eyes as a tall, heavily-built man, with a stupid face and features which spoke only of coarseness and brutality, came into view.

"Hi! do yer want ter be killed?" he shouted in a harsh voice. "Yer'd better keep away from that brute if yer don't. He's a perfect devil."

In an instant all the indignation and resentment in the young girl's nature was aroused by this unjust accusation, for her

love for horses was so intense that she seemed to hold almost magical power over them, and her friends used often to say that they believed she possessed some secret means of communicating to them her own thoughts and reading theirs.

However that might be, certain it was that they all loved her, from her own beautiful little pony to the greatest forlornity that ever bore harness, and her word rarely failed to win a response of some sort.

Ever since her father had rented their pretty summer home in May, she had watched the beautiful young animal driven by the owner of the adjoining property, and, during the horse's occasional days of freedom in the pasture separated from her home by a high hedge, had striven to coax him to her. But with her keen intuitions she made up her mind that the animal was not kindly treated, and consequently lacked confidence in human beings.

"But I shall yet win him over; see if I don't," she had said to her father as she sat at breakfast that very morning, "and I'll find out the cause of his distrust as well; or my name is not Marion."

"I won't try to dispute that, sweetheart, since I gave you the name myself," replied her father as he rose from the table and came for his good-by kiss before leaving for town, "so I dare say I shall soon have our four-footed neighbor's biography."

"You needn't tease me," she said, with a wag of her pretty head, "I'm going to *do* it."

So now she stood confronting the owner of the unpleasant voice and more unpleasant personality, and her own voice quivered with indignation as she answered:

"Do you see anything very fiendish in him just at present? Perhaps you might find the angelic side of his nature, just as I have, if you would take pains to try."

All this time, although quivering with apprehension, the horse had stood perfectly still with the girl's arm resting protectingly across his withers.

"Is he *your* horse?" she continued, for the man had stopped stock-still to regard the great animal's intrepid little defender with amazement.

"Naw! he aint that; and I don't want him neither. He belongs to the boss up yander. But I've got to take care of him, and if he don't look out I'll kill him some day, if he don't get a lick at me first. Here, come on out o' that, the boss wants ye," and he made a grab at the horse's forelock.

Up flew the nervous creature's head as though to avoid a blow, to which, undoubtedly, he was only too well accustomed, and in so doing he hit the hard bridge of his nose against the man's chin, causing him to bite his tongue. With a furious oath he

drew back his huge fist and dealt the horse a cruel blow upon his soft muzzle.

With the pathetic cry a wounded horse gives, the poor creature fell almost upon his haunches, and then, with a superb bound, leaped clear and clean over the man's head.

It had all happened in a few seconds, but those few seconds had been sufficient to arouse within the girl's soul all the fury of righteous anger, and with a wild cry of, "Oh, how *dare* you do such a cruel thing! How *dare* you, when you know he did not mean to hurt you!" she caught hold of the man by both his arms and shook him till his teeth fairly chattered. Then, pushing him from her, she cried: "Now go! You are not fit to have the care of a wild bull, let alone such a splendid creature as that, and you shall never, never touch him again if I can prevent it."

Never probably in all his life had this great, strong man encountered such a little

fury as now confronted him with flashing eyes and crimson cheeks. The girl's whole nature rose in wrath against such injustice, and for the time being she was beside herself, and all thoughts of "Mrs. Grundy" flew to the four winds.

Too astonished to speak, he stood like a wooden image staring straight at her, then, as she stamped her pretty little foot and pointed toward the gate, he turned and slunk off toward the distant stables; for once, at least, dealt with as he deserved, although it had fallen to the lot of a girl of fifteen to administer justice.

"Oh, Jingles," she cried, now almost in tears, "wasn't it awful! Come quick and we will look after the dear fellow," and she ran swiftly to the far end of the field in which the frightened horse had taken refuge.

There he stood with his poor head hanging dejectedly down, and the blood dripping

from the cut nostril. Marion approached him very quietly, fearing that his recent cruel treatment might have undone all she had striven so patiently to gain, but the intelligent animal had learned more than one lesson that day, and the girl had won his confidence forever.

Taking the poor, smarting muzzle in her soft, white hands, she examined it closely and found the cut to be a bad one. "If I only had some water," she said to herself, "I could bathe it. I know, I'll lead him to that spring down at the edge of the field," and untying the pretty Roman sash from her waist, she placed it very gently around the horse's neck, and, saying in her sweet voice, "Come along, dear," she led him quietly beside her.

Her dainty linen handkerchief served to bathe the injured nose, and when the bleeding was stanched she turned toward the gate, intending to lead her patient home,

little realizing what a pretty picture she made as she came across the fields with the afternoon sunlight falling upon her beautiful brown hair and pretty white gown, with one hand leading the handsome sorrel horse by his gay silken leader, while the other was laid caressingly across his neck.

To the gentleman standing concealed behind a clump of evergreens just beyond the gate it seemed the prettiest sight he had ever looked upon, and a pleasing ending to the harrowing one to which he had been an unseen witness.

Slipping from his hiding-place as the girl approached, he advanced with outstretched hand, saying: "Little neighbor, I have more than one thing for which to thank you this afternoon, but the greatest is for your heroic defense of my horse. Don't try to tell me anything about it," as Marion gave a slight start and opened her lips to speak,

—"I saw the whole occurrence from beginning to end, and now I know why one of my most valuable animals has thus far in his career been pronounced vicious."

"Oh, he isn't! I *know* he isn't," exclaimed his champion.

"So do I,—*now,* but I have been a long time learning it, and, but for you, I should probably never have done so; since that man, upon whom you wreaked your vengeance," and here a rather amused smile curved the corners of Mr. Ryder's lips, "was cunning enough to conceal his true disposition when in my presence."

Marion colored slightly, and said: "I know it was a dreadful thing to do, and I don't know what papa will say when I tell him about it, but I was so angry that I just *couldn't* keep still."

"It is fortunate for Billy that you did not, or his future might have been a miserable one; might it not, old fellow?" he

answered as he reached out to take the horse's leader. But Billy's faith in mankind had been sorely shaken, and he started aside. "Tut, tut!" said Mr. Ryder, "this is a bad business, and I think I shall have to impose upon your friendship for Billy by asking you to lead him to the stable for me, since he seems so fearful of ill-treatment. What is your name, little maid? We have been neighbors six weeks, but I am so rarely home that I am almost a stranger here."

"Marion Taylor," was the reply. "Come, Billy," she added, "I didn't know your name before, but we got acquainted, didn't we, dear?" and she laid her flushed face against the warm, silky neck. "Have you more horses?" she asked as they walked along together.

"Yes, a large number, for I raise them. Billy, here, is one of my handsomest, and, but for his unfortunate disposition, he

would be the most valuable. I understand him better now, I think."

"Oh, I hope so! He is so beautiful, and I am sure he would love me dearly if I could see him every day. May I?"

"You certainly may, and tell your father that Mr. Ryder will give himself the pleasure of calling upon him this evening," he said, as he shook hands with her and said good-by at the stable door.

Marion, with Jingles at her heels, ran swiftly home across the field, while Mr. Ryder went in quest of the delinquent Sam, with whom he had an interview—brief, but very much to the point. A few hours later he was seated on Mr. Taylor's delightful piazza enjoying with him an after-dinner cigar as they talked, for they soon discovered that theirs was really an old acquaintance rather than a new one, since both had been students at the same university years before.

When Mr. Ryder said good-night at eleven o'clock, Billy had become Mr. Taylor's property, for the latter had long been in search of a well-trained saddle-horse for Marion, and was glad to find such a desirable one.

"Marion will cure any peculiarities of disposition he may possess," he said; "the child loves horses better than she loves people, I believe; at all events, she understands them better and they her."

"You missed a good deal by not seeing her this afternoon," replied Mr. Ryder. "By Jove! she gave it to Sam in good, round, set terms. I don't believe the fellow has recovered yet," and he laughed as he recalled the little girl's righteous wrath.

As Marion stood upon the piazza next morning she was surprised to see Billy led in at the gate.

"Why, papa," she called to her father, who sat in the dining room behind her,

" they are bringing Billy in here; what does it mean? "

" It means, little daughter," said her father, as he joined her, " that Mr. Ryder and I have decided that you are to be Billy's future mistress, since you have evidently won his confidence and love. You need a saddle-horse, and he is perfectly trained. Add this pet to your many others, for I dare say your heart is large enough to hold even Billy."

A note addressed to Miss Marion Taylor was handed to her by the groom, and contained the following message: " For Billy's champion, with whom I hope he may dwell long and serve faithfully, and henceforth be known, not as Billy Ryder, but as ' Billee Taylor.' " From that moment " Billee's " life was revolutionized, and he was as happy as his days were long.

Marion tended him herself until the poor nose was quite healed. Billee's gratitude

was boundless, and he showed it in every possible way. Could he have done so he would have followed his beloved young mistress straight into the house, and very often, indeed, he did follow her on to the piazza.

Her pony was rather small for the saddle, so Billee was always used for riding; and many a delightful canter they had; the beautiful animal fully realizing how precious was the burden he carried, and swinging along as smoothly as a rocking-chair.

Long after the sore nose was entirely well Billee remembered the cruel blow, and when Marion said, "Poor Billee, where did he get hurt?" the comical fellow would lift up his head and raise his upper lip to show the scar, which he still carried upon it and his nostril. In a wonderfully short time his nervousness, and what had seemed to be a sort of resentment toward mankind in general, entirely vanished, and he became the sweetest-tempered animal one could wish

for, and as full of pranks and mischief as a kitten.

Marion could always control him with a word, and even in the midst of one of his wildest pranks, her voice was sufficient to bring him back to his senses.

He and Toddles, the pony, became fast friends, and it was a common thing for the neighbors to see Marion seated upon the lawn with Billee, Toddles, Jingles, and the two kittens, Blink and Wink, lying or standing beside her. No matter where she went, whether it was for a stroll by the river, a walk to the post office, or a drive behind little Toddles, if Billee caught sight of her he was determined to follow her, and, if prevented by his groom from so doing, would neigh to her as long as she was in sight.

While prowling about his stable yard one afternoon he somehow managed to pick up a nail and, as though he were sure that his

beloved mistress would help him, he whinnied and whinnied until his groom came to learn the cause. Seeing the horse limp, the man tried to take up his foot to examine it, but Billee preferred selecting his own surgeon, and although he could scarcely hobble, he pushed past his groom, who let him go, and limped to the front of the house, where he felt certain of finding his mistress. She was seated in her favorite chair near the hedge, and with a glad neigh he hobbled up to her and held up the lame foot.

"Why, Billee dear! what is the matter?" she cried, and, jumping up, she took the poor foot into her hands. Billee poked his nose down and made a queer grunting sort of sound, as though trying to tell her his trouble.

"Yes, dear, I see what it is; we will soon have it out," she said, and Thomas was summoned and the nail removed.

"Now come with me, Billee, and we will

fix it all comfortable," and she led him back to his stall.

She soon had the feverish foot standing in a tub of oil meal, and, bidding him "be a good horse and not take his foot out of the tub till she gave him leave," she left him. A dozen times a day during the four or five that followed, she went out to pour cold water on the ankle and see that the foot was properly cared for, and each time she appeared Billee's joy was boundless, and he would hold up his foot to have it dressed.

Such constant care could not fail to effect a prompt cure, and in a week's time Billee was as frisky as ever. But he never forgot his lame foot, and ever after, when he felt particularly in need of sympathy, would put on a make-believe limp, and if Marion said "Poor Billee Taylor, he has *such* a lame foot," the rogue would hold it up, put his nose down to it, and give voice to a low

snicker, as though trying to tell the story all over again.

Billee's life was like the good prince's in the fairy tales: "He lived long and happily, and died at a ripe old age."

CHARLIE & CO.

CHARLIE & CO.

CHARLIE was distinctly a local character. I doubt if he could claim any special distinction even in his own town, and yet among his few friends he held an enviable place, for they loved and trusted him, and neither the love nor the trust was misplaced.

It is more than five years ago since we first met Charlie & Co., and even then neither of the partners was young nor handsome. But they commanded our attention.

It was in the summer of 1894 that I was sitting upon the piazza of a friend's home in the pretty suburban town of Elton. It was about four o'clock, and as I sat drinking in the beauty of the sunshine and the shadow as they flickered upon the soft green lawn,

I heard the measured pat-pat of a horse's footfall. Alive to the slightest sound, either regular or irregular, in the footfall of the animal I love best of all my fourfooted friends, I instantly recognized in this one an unfamiliar sound, as though the animal making it had a mode of navigation peculiar to itself.

As I glanced up the sound suddenly ceased, and I saw standing at the foot of the driveway a bay horse harnessed to a milk-wagon. It would have been difficult for me to tell what there was in the animal to distinguish him from a dozen others which might have stopped at the door, but there was an indefinable *something*, and I watched him, feeling instinctively that something interesting would develop. Nor did my instinct mislead me. The driver of the horse, an elderly man, whose kindly face and scrupulous neatness were in perfect harmony with the contented look worn

by the animal he drove, and with its glossy, shining coat, which testified to the care given to it, stepped from his wagon and then turned to take from it a wire stand filled with jars of rich, creamy milk, and started with them toward the kitchen at the rear of the house.

As his driver left him the horse turned back one ear, but further than that gave no evidence that he was at all interested in the man's movements. But directly the sound of his footfalls had ceased to be heard, the pretty bay head, with the softest of velvety white noses and big brown eyes, was turned quite around in order to have a good look into the wagon—for, happily, the headstall had no blinders. Evidently all was as it should be, and with a nod of his head, as though saying "yes," the animal started off.

My first impulse was to call out "whoa," but something in the wise, self-contained

air of the creature compelled me to await developments.

Curving well outward, that the wheels of the wagon need not come in contact with the curbstone, the horse started down the street, crossing immediately to the right side in order to obey the rule of the highway which says, "Keep to the right." Passing four or five houses, he stopped at one, and, bringing his wagon close to the curb, turned and looked around. A moment later his driver reappeared and followed his business partner across the street. Again the milk jars were taken from the wagon, and again the horse started on, this time to the second house. It was funny enough to watch him; he was as familiar with the route, and the time necessary for each delivery, as his master, and evidently felt as much responsibility.

Turning to my friend, who just then joined me upon the piazza, I asked:

"Who is the milkman whose horse seems as familiar with the milk route as he himself does?"

"Oh, it is Mr. Harris, and he is as kind as he looks. His horse Charlie is amusing, is he not? Yes, he knows the customers as well as Mr. Harris does, and we always speak of them as 'Charlie & Co.' I doubt if Mr. Harris could get on without his silent partner."

"Does the horse always act as he has today?"

"Invariably. He is as punctual and methodical as his master is neat and kind-hearted. They have served me with milk for many years, and I should not be able to keep house without them, I believe."

"I shall not forget them," I replied, "and if I ever make Elton my home, I shall certainly give my order to 'Charlie & Co.'"

A few months later we removed to Elton, and I lost no time in requesting Charlie & Co. to include our home in their daily

rounds. It was at that period that I became well acquainted with Charlie and learned to appreciate his wonderful intelligence, and the clever ways which so endeared him to his master.

Twice daily did Charlie appear at my door, and it was not long before it became his favorite stopping-place, for at it he rarely failed to receive an apple, a biscuit, and at last, when he had acquired a taste for it, a lump of sugar. But this was distinctly a cultivated taste, and his efforts to learn to like the dainty were funny beyond words to express. My little daughter was the first to cultivate Charlie's taste for sweets, and rarely a day passed that she did not watch for his coming and have ready the dainty.

Charlie had a peculiar gait, which was probably the result of having been used under the saddle in his younger days. It was neither a pace, nor yet a trot, but a

sort of cross between the two, and when he desired to hasten it he broke into a distinct canter. Directly he left the nearest neighbor's at whose house he was forced to stop before reaching his little friend's home, Charlie, in the words of dear Lewis Carroll, would come "gallumping"—no other word will express it—for his dainty. The dear old head would be put close down to the arms waiting to caress him, and after a bit of affectionate demonstration on both sides, the proffered lump of sugar would be taken, toyed with a moment by the velvety lips, bitten in two, and held while Charlie seemed thinking the matter over, meantime looking at his little friend and shaking his head wisely.

"Eat it, Charlie; it's delicious," the little one would say. But Charlie had his own ideas on the subject, and was not to be hurried. It was not until he had thoroughly tested this new article of diet, turned it over

upon his tongue, crunched it with his nippers, that he finally decided it was really intended to go the way of oats and hay.

"Ye jest *spoil* 'im, missie," his master would say. "I can't get 'im to stop 'alf a minute at the other 'ouses, 'e's that crazy to get on to you and 'is sugar. Come on now, you old good-for-nothing, and get along to the other customers who'll be wantin' their milk!" And his master would climb into the wagon and slash at him with a whip whose length of lash was a mockery.

One of Charlie's besetting sins was his determination to get a bite of grass whenever the opportunity offered. As a rule his check-rein, put on him for that very reason, prevented him from reaching the grass which grew beside the average curbstone, but just opposite our home was a terrace a foot or more high, and this was Charlie's Mecca.

When there came a day which was too stormy for his little friend to meet him, the terrace at the opposite side of the street came into service. But don't for a moment fancy that he ever started for it so long as he heard his master's footfalls—ah, no! he was far too wise for that. But once Mr. Harris was safely disposed of in his customer's kitchen, then Charlie would calmly start for the terrace, which the length of his check-rein just permitted him to reach, and for about three minutes enjoy unalloyed bliss. The instant he heard his master's returning steps he was at once overwhelmed with business cares, and started off for his next customer's house as hard as he could go.

I would that it lay in my power to convey to you some slight idea of Charlie's "cuteness"—for only that Yankee word will express it. The intelligent eyes told how well he understood every word his master

spoke to him, and their softness told his affection for that master who cared for him so faithfully.

In summer and winter, through sunshine and through storm, did Charlie bring us milk, and I wish I could tell those who read this simple little history that he still does so; but dear old Charlie, who so loved and was beloved by his master, gave his life to save that master from a frightful death.

In the spring of '98 we removed to another house, and Charlie had few customers in the new street and had never stopped at that particular house. In order to test his memory our little daughter resolved to go out to the curbstone the first evening we spent in the new home, and, without saying a word, stand there and wait for Charlie to recognize her as he came along. A little before four o'clock she saw him trot-pacing toward her, and was instantly recognized by him and greeted with a soft "hoo-hoo-

hoo," as though he considered it undignified to whinny aloud while in harness. From that time Charlie needed no guiding, and after partaking of his sugar, went upon his way to a neighbor's two doors beyond.

We two were his only customers in that street, and during the summer Mrs. Thompson's house was closed for several weeks. At first Charlie was determined to go on to the closed house, and not until he had received most peremptory orders to "stand still, now, and wait till I come back; don't you know those folks aren't there now?" and had been summarily turned around and headed in the opposite direction did he grasp the situation; but once it was settled in the horse-mind, all was plain sailing for both horse and driver, and directly the jars of milk had vanished around the corner of our house, Charlie would turn his wagon carefully around and stand perfectly still to await his master's return; for the next

customer's house was many blocks away, and Charlie had no notion of making Mr. Harris walk to it. We often wondered how he reasoned it all out, but he certainly did, and never by any chance missed a customer or gave his master an uncomfortably long walk.

Charlie's place in this world was indeed a humble one, but the example he set might be followed with advantage by many a human being. At two o'clock each afternoon Charlie would watch his master as he milked his herd of sleek cows. He knew just how their turns came and exactly how long it would take to milk "Jinny" and "Bossy" and "Buttercup" and "Daffy," and so on down the herd of ten or a dozen; and while they were milked Charlie poked about the barnyard. He appreciated a joke, and was never happier than when his master was the object of it. He would frequently come up softly behind Mr. Harris,

who was very hard of hearing, and thrust his warm nose over his master's shoulder as he sat upon a milking stool, and when Mr. Harris, giving a start which nearly proved fatal to the contents of the shining pail, turned about to shake his fist at the horse and cry "Get along out of the way, you scamp!" Charlie would seem as delighted over the prank as a child.

One day Charlie was unusually winsome, and, as Mr. Harris prepared to take his place in the wagon, he stopped to stroke the soft neck and say:

"Eh, Charlie, you're a great plague, but it would be 'ard getting another like you," —little dreaming how soon he would have to supply the faithful Charlie's place. They started off for a customer whose house stood just a little beyond the railroad track. There were no gates at that crossing, and Mr. Harris was too hard of hearing to realize his danger from the approaching express

train, already thundering around the curve above. But Charlie was not deaf, and he did his best to hold back from the track; but his master, impatient at his delay, which he could not understand, called sharply to him to go on. Obedient to the last, Charlie went, but he could not seem to make up his mind to bring the wagon behind him upon the track. Planting himself firmly between the rails, he stood fast and met his doom. An instant later the great iron monster came crashing upon him, tearing him out of the wagon, whose shafts snapped like pipe-stems, and hurling the poor creature a hundred feet beyond. When the train was brought to a standstill, and the frightened passengers and engineer hurried to the scene of disaster, all that was left of poor, faithful Charlie was a lifeless form lying upon the grass beside the track. But even in death he had testified to his affection and faithfulness, for had he not

stood firm to receive the death blow rather than lead his master into danger? Is it to be wondered that tears filled that master's eyes when he bent over the lifeless form of his faithful horse?

And so Charlie, kind, gentle, faithful, Charlie, came into and passed out of our lives. Faithful and true, he proved to us that even a dumb creature may teach beautiful lessons that we all will do well to remember.

GRAY LADY'S ONLY SON

GRAY LADY'S ONLY SON

PART I

A NOVEL TRANSPORTATION COMPANY

IT was a warm September afternoon "down to the cape," as the local phrase runs. The drowsy little hamlet consisted, first, of a small wooden railway station, not unlike an immense drygoods box in which some frugal-minded Yankee had cut holes to serve for a door and two windows, and then in a moment of reckless extravagance had painted a dull red; next, a church, which appeared to have been dropped there by mistake; and last, of a few farmhouses, which had no doubt been there since the days of Governor Bradford. Over the door

of the station was the sign "Post Office," and, consequently, one had reason to believe that "Uncle Sam" had some claim upon this sleepy little settlement. Not a store was to be seen; not a sign of business anywhere. Even the railroad station was deserted; for no train would come up from Province Town until six o'clock, and the one going "down cape" stopped only on signal. So the station agent, who was also postmaster, was absent in a distant field, busily stacking corn. The sun beat down upon the sandy road from which the hot air arose in quivering waves. Across from the station lay a large field surrounded by a "post-rail" fence, and standing by the bars, with her head hanging lazily over the topmost one, was an old gray mare with her colt beside her. She seemed half asleep, for her eyes were closed and occasionally her head would nod exactly like that of a drowsy old woman, and bring her throat

bumping against the rail. That served to rouse her for a moment, but she would presently slip off again into dreamland, perhaps to relive the days when she had been able to skim over the ground with the best of her kind; for "Gray Lady" came of famous stock, and the colt at her side gave fair promise of inheriting his mother's good qualities. Just now, however, he seemed principally made up of legs and a scraggy mane; but the eyes below the "bristle" were wonderfully soft, and looked out between the bars with the half-mischievous, half-pleading look one often sees in a child. The delicate little muzzle was as soft as a moleskin. The tiny lips nibbled at the lichens on the rail, and, not finding these particularly satisfying, began to fuss about the mother's warm neck, creeping gradually upward until they reached her head, where they found a tempting plaything, and she was rudely roused

from her reveries by having her ear sharply pinched.

With a squeal she jerked her head out of reach, and the colt, as if highly elated with his prank, went careering over the field, his long legs executing some very extraordinary feats; for he was only six months old.

As he pranced off a shrill whistle was heard, and a moment later a boy, about twelve years of age, came down the dusty road, dragging behind him a nondescript sort of vehicle evidently of home manufacture, since it consisted of a plank fastened upon the wheels of a baby carriage.

The boy was barefooted; his clothes had seen long service; likewise his hat, for a rent in the crown afforded so free a circulation of air that there was no danger of his ever becoming bald for lack of it. Evidently he was no stranger, for the instant Gray Lady heard his whistle she raised her head, the sleepy look giving place to a very

alert one, as she began to whinny softly. When he came within sight of her he shouted: "Hi! old Lady, be you a-lookin' for me? Reckon I'm on time, though; train haint gone down yit, an' yer can't never expect me afore that, yer know."

As he talked he lifted a small basket of apples from the wagon. Lady snorted and whinnied, and, the sound reaching her fly-away son, he stopped short in his wild career. Without turning, he glanced over his shoulder and gave a funny little imitation of his mother's greeting.

"You come along back here. I aint a gonter come tramplin' clear off there after you, and don't you think it," called the boy. "Sonny" gave an independent little toss of his head as though to say: "I'm not *forced* to come, but I will, since it is you," and then started across the field; his funny, long legs flying about in the most aimless manner.

"Now old Lady, I'll give you your spread first, 'cause you was on hand ter say 'howdy,' you know"; and, taking up his basket, he began to feed one apple at a time to his four-footed friend. This was too much for Sonny, who had got scent of the fruit and was determined to have his share.

The dainty muzzle was thrust over the boy's shoulder as he stood feeding Lady; then it was poked into his hands and rubbed against his coat, and, as a last resort, when all these hints proved futile, a very vigorous nip was given to his arm.

"Hi, you young scamp! What are you up to? Is thet the way you mean to treat me after I lugged all these apples over here? Now just you hold on; you didn't care a cent about me till you found out I had somethin', did you? That's just like some folks; they aint got no use fer a feller except ter knock him 'round till they git a

notion he's wuth somethin' to them, and then—oh, my! *aint* they sweet? Reckon I've learned somethin' o' *that* game. Now don't you try it on, fer you an' yer ma is all the friends I got, and if *you* go back on me I'll plumb give out. So come on and let's be friends." After this bit of moralizing he put his arms about the warm little neck and he and Sonny "made love" in the most approved style.

While the three cronies were indulging in this bit of equine and human sentiment a shrill whistle announced the approach of the down train.

"There!" exclaimed the boy, "you hear that? That means the mail bag; and I've got to go pick it up; like 'nough 'taint got mor'n one letter anyhow. Hullo! There go two more toots; reckon they're a-goin' ter set down a visitor this trip and I'll be called upon ter tote their 'Saratogie' up ter the 'Summer Hotel'—meanin' old

Grump Wheeler's attic chamber," he added with a comical grin as he scudded across the road.

When the mail bag was tossed off he picked it up with an educated toe, deftly landed it upon his wagon, then squatted upon it to await further developments. After depositing an immense valise upon the platform, the conductor lifted down a cripple child of about seven or eight years of age, and looked helplessly around for a place to seat her. A delicate looking woman, evidently her mother, quickly followed and placed beneath the child's arms the crutches she carried for her.

"It is strange that Ruth isn't here to meet us," said she. "Do you know of anyone who can take us up to my sister's house?"

"Can't say as I do," answered the conductor. "Wish I could stop and help you out, but I can't," and he waved his hand

to the engineer and sprang aboard his train.

The woman stood looking helplessly about and the child thumped across the platform on her crutches, as though the motion was a relief from standing. Catching sight of the boy, the woman walked quickly over to him and asked: "Is there a wagon of any kind that I can get to take us where we want to go?"

"That depends on where you're a-goin'," was the laconic reply.

"To Mrs. Caleb Parker's; she is my sister. I wrote to her to expect us by this train, but I'm afraid she did not receive the letter, for she would have sent to meet us if she had."

"When did you send the letter and where did you send it from?" asked the boy.

"I sent it yesterday morning from Boston."

"Then it's right snug in this very bag I'm

sittin' on this minit, fur there aint been no mail sense this time yistiddy."

"Dear me! dear me! What am I to do? Is it far to Mrs. Parker's?"

"Nigh 'bout a mile, I reckon."

"Is there *anybody* you can get to carry us over?"

"Don't know nobody, less it's Squire Davis, an' his house is on a spell beyond Mrs. Parker's. Most of the men folks is out shuckin' their corn, like Pop Bates up yonder. He's the station agent. See him?"

"Couldn't he help us?"

The boy laughed: "Mebby he could if yer could make him understand what yer wanted, but he's as deef as that post yonder." He pointed to the post-rail fence across the road, and then, as though the action had suggested something, he hopped up, saying: "Say, I'll tell yer what yer can do, if yer will. Like as not yer'll be scared ter; but yer needn't, fer Lady's as steady as

a rock and wouldn't harm nothin'. She often pulls me all round the lot, but old Wheeler, the man what she belongs to, don't know it; he'd caterpillar, sure, if he did."

The woman did not ask what physical or mental condition was implied as a possibility for "old Wheeler" should he gain a knowledge of Lady's performance, but she hastened to say: "If you know of some way of getting us there pray tell it quickly, for Lucy is nearly ready to drop."

"Will you let her ride on my wagon if I fix it up for her?"

"Certainly; but you will never be able to draw her and this great satchel all that distance."

"I aint a-gonter; Lady yonder will," and he gave a funny laugh as he scampered across the sandy road.

Placing around the mare's neck a piece of rope which he had picked up from the station platform, he then let down the bars

and led her out. "Now, look a-here, old Lady, you've got ter be on yer very primest behavior, 'cause I've give my word fer yer. Do yer hear? So mind what I'm a-sayin'," and he led her in front of his wagon. Picking up the rope with which he had drawn it, he tied it firmly to Lady's long tail.

"There, ma'am! How's that fer a swell Boston Common broosh?"

"Why, she will never in this world draw it that way; your wagon will be kicked to atoms."

"Will it? Just see now," and, stretching himself full length upon it and crossing his arms beneath his head, he called out, "Git along, Lady." Lady gave one inquiring look behind to see that all was right; whisked her tail about to be sure that all was fairly hitched, and, calling her son to her side, marched off down the road as sedately as though she were harnessed to a farm wagon. Sonny capered along beside

her or stopped to poke his nose into the boy's face. They certainly presented a comical spectacle, for the boy had crossed his legs and one bare foot stuck straight up in the air.

After they had journeyed about twenty rods he called out: "Halt!" and Lady stopped. "Right about face, forward march!" cried the boy, and Lady calmly turned herself about and marched back to the station.

"Well, I never! If that don't beat all I ever heard tell of," exclaimed the woman. "Well, come along; we've got to get there somehow, and this seems the only way."

"Wait a minit and I'll fix it all hunky," cried the boy, and, running down to the end of the platform, he picked up a lot of potato sacks which were lying there. These he piled on the wagon, then, wadding some of them up for a pillow, he said: "There you are, ma'am, fine as a fiddle."

Together they placed the little invalid upon the queer vehicle, and after settling the big valise at her feet, as a sort of bunker in case Lady should prove resentful, the boy took the leader and off they started. It was a funny enough procession and would have drawn a smile from the dullest.

As they trudged along through the sand the woman asked: "How did you come to try such a prank as this, I'd like to know? What is your name?"

"Bob Slocum," he replied, answering the second question first: "Oh, I don't know," he continued, "yer see old Pop Bates is so deef that he can't half hear what folks says to him, and so I kinder got into the way of comin' along 'bout train time when the mail was due, and then I could help him out. Sometimes there is a letter or something for some of the folks 'round here and I take it to 'em. That saves 'em comin' to the post office, and they near 'bout always give me a

hunk of cake or a piece of pie, er suthin', an' say: 'Thanky, Bob.' That's about the only time I ever get anything *sweet* for my heart er my gizzard; fer old Wheeler—he's the man I live with—aint got nothin' fer a feller but thumps and leavin's."

"Haven't you any parents?"

"Nope; don't even remember them. Ma, she died when I was born, and dad didn't live long after her. Folks 'round here says he died 'cause ma did. He worked for old Wheeler, and I reckon most likely he starved ter death. He'd like to starve me if he could. But I guess I aint the starvin' kind. I can git along somehow, and folks 'round here is pretty good to me."

"What do you do for Mr. Wheeler? You can't be more than twelve years old."

"I'll be twelve next November. What *don't* I do, you'd better ask. 'Most anything a boy twelve years can do an' a lot some

fifteen can't. I milk seven cows twice a day; cut all the wood; tote water; take care of the stock; run errants; hoe corn, an' do about a hundred things beside; an' all fer my board an' keep—mostly *keep.*"

"Do you go to school?"

"Aint none to go ter. Nearest one's five mile away, an' old Wheeler don't keep no trotters fer my use."

"Can you read?"

"Yes'm, some. There was a lady stoppin' up to Squire Davis's one summer and she learnt me; an' ever sence I've been a-pickin' up some from the newspapers. Squire Davis takes a lot of 'em, an' when he's done with 'em he lets me have 'em."

By this time they had reached their destination and the boy, pointing to a low white house which nestled in a garden filled with hollyhocks, dahlias, and brilliant asters, said: "There's Mis' Parker's. You go on in an' tell Si, her hired man, ter come

out an' get yer bag whilst I stay here along with my friends."

Without a thought of questioning him the woman started for the house, and, turning to the child upon the wagon, who thus far had scarcely spoken a word, he said: "You'll soon be all right now. Are yer tired?"

"Not very. The ride on the train from Boston was awful hot, but this part has been splendid. How did you ever get Lady to let you hitch her up this way? She loves you, doesn't she, and Sonny does, too; how did you make them?"

"Guess 'cause we didn't have nobody else to love. Old Wheeler don't care nothin' for her now she is gettin' old. He hardly ever takes any notice of her. She used to be the fastest horse on the Cape, and there aint one that's got better blood in her veins. I bring her apples or somethin' every day, and I was the first one Sonny, here, saw

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after he come into the world. Sonny an' I are great cronies. I'm only waitin' fer him to grow up, an' then we're goin' to run away, aren't we, old feller?" and he laid his arm over the colt's neck.

Sonny nestled close up to him, and Lady looked benignly upon them both.

"Will you come to see me while I am here?" asked the child.

"I'll come when I can get off. Bet I'd ketch it now if they knew I was gallavintin' like this. I'll sneak over when I can. Here comes Si."

Out bustled Mrs. Parker, followed by her sister; both talking at once. Close behind them came "Si."

"My land er Goshen!" exclaimed Mrs. Parker, "did anyone ever hear tell of such doin's? And that blessed lamb dragged up to my front door just as if she was a sack er flour. How do, Bob; seems as if this part of the world couldn't get along without you,

nohow; don't it? Run 'long 'round to the back of the house to the buttry and eat your fill; you certain sure deserve it this time."

"Can't now; got to get back with Lady or I'll have Mr. Wheeler after me. Will the stuff keep? I'll come along 'round to-morrow if it will."

"Yes, indeed, and if it don't there's plenty more that will," and she nodded her head at him reassuringly.

"All right, I'll be on hand. Good-by, folks," and, flopping down on his wagon, he called out, "Right about, Lady," and the wise creature turned around and started back toward the station.

They returned more quickly than they had come, for Lady jogged along, with the cart jerking and rattling behind her. They soon reached the pasture, and, after placing his charges safely within it, he put up the bars once more, and then clambered upon the topmost one.

"Now come along and say 'good-by,' 'cause I've got ter git 'long back."

Lady came up to him and laid her big head across his shoulder, and the boy reached up and circled her soft, warm neck with his arm as he rested his face against her mane.

Little Sonny looked at him a moment as though to say, "Do you want me, too?"

"Yes, come along and say good-by, too," said Bob. Sonny laid his head across Bob's knee and looked up at him with his brown eyes full of love for the friend who never forgot him, but came to him day after day, in sunshine or shower, to bring the dainty of which he often deprived himself that his four-footed friends might not be disappointed.

And as he sits there stroking the colt's silky ears and nestling close to the mother's neck, we must bid him "good-by," too, and skim forward on the wings of time to a

period eight years later, when both he and Sonny have grown up and Sonny found an opportunity to repay him for his years of devotion to himself and his mother, Gray Lady.

PART II

SONNY'S GRATITUDE

THE sun beat fiercely down upon the Cuban shore, and waves of hot air quivered above the sand. A short distance off shore the great transports swung quietly to their anchors in the sheltered bay, as boatload after boatload of troops disembarked and were rowed to the white beach, where their comrades were already busy getting their arms and the camp paraphernalia up to the camping-ground.

A cavalry regiment with its horses was being sent ashore; and a wretched enough time they were having, too; for the transportation facilities were extremely limited. One after another the poor beasts were

forced upon the gangplank, which was so arranged that it slid them off into the water to swim for the beach, probably five hundred yards distant.

They were nearly all stout, brave animals, and had seen hard service upon the Western frontier, but this was an entirely new experience, and many were nearly wild with terror. As they were forced into the water a man in the stern of one of the boats would take the halter-strap and guide one swimming animal to the shore, and the others followed as fast as the waves and their own strength permitted.

Our deepest interest is centered on one splendid, big, dappled gray which stands at the end of the gangplank about to take his turn. His beautiful eyes show that he is keenly observing all that is happening about him. His delicate ears are pricked forward, or laid back as though to catch the faintest sound, and the wide nostrils quiver

with excitement as he draws in long breaths of the briny air, or gives a snort of protest. Beside him, with his arm thrown caressingly over the beautifully arched neck, stands a young soldier, evidently a sergeant. He is a handsome fellow, whose bronzed skin and muscular form show that he has seen service. Unquestionably he and his horse understand each other thoroughly, for he is talking to the intelligent creature, who seems to comprehend him perfectly.

"Now, old fellow, don't you get panicky when you're dipped. Just put your best leg forward and pungle straight for that shore yonder. Do you hear what I'm saying?" and he looked into the horse's eyes as one might look into the eyes of a human being.

The horse gave his head a toss up and down, as though he were answering "yes," and then turned to rub it against the man's

shoulder. "Come along, gray jacket," called the man who stood at the end of the plank, "it's your turn now," and he reached for the halter-strap. The horse walked to the end of the plank, planted his dainty feet upon it, and would not budge another inch. The man coaxed and tugged, but all to no purpose. At last, losing patience, he cried: "Well, you're a dandy, aint you, now? I'll get something that 'll give you your marchin' orders." He reached for a heavy balestick which was lying on the deck, but before he could administer the blow the stick was wrenched from his hand and flung far out into the blue water.

The man looked in utter amazement to encounter a pair of gray eyes that fairly snapped fire at him: "Did you think I was going to let you knock him with that stick? Not much. Come on, old man, you'll follow *me,* I know," said the sergeant, and, going to the side of the ship, he caught hold of a

rope which dangled from above and swung himself over the side, to drop into one of the boats below.

As he disappeared the horse gave a loud neigh, as though to call him back. "Come, Sonny, come on, old fellow," called his master; and as though the ship no longer held anything worth remaining on board for, the beautiful creature gave another loud whinny and plunged into the water.

With powerful strokes he swam straight for the beloved object in the boat, which was being pulled slowly toward the shore. The sergeant, who was now seated in the stern of the boat, reached out, and, taking hold of the leader which had been loosely knotted about the horse's neck, gently towed the swimming animal, while talking to him encouragingly. And, as though he gained strength and courage from the beloved voice, the horse grew less and less nervous and settled down to the long, steady strokes

which carried him swiftly toward the shore. They were within a hundred yards of it when he began to plunge and hold back.

"Come on, Sonny; come on; what's up?" asked his master.

But the horse was unable to respond.

"By Jove! he's stuck in the seaweed; he'll be a goner, sure as guns; that stuff has done up more 'n one of 'em already," cried one of the men.

"He won't be a 'goner' if I can help it!" exclaimed the sergeant, and in another instant he had cast hat, coat, and arms into the boat and plunged into the water.

"Steady, Sonny; steady, old boy. I'll have you free in a minute," he called to the struggling horse. At the sound of his voice the wild plunges ceased and he looked pathetically at his master with his great, eloquent eyes.

Swimming to the horse's side, the man rested one hand upon the broad back, and

reached down into the water; but he could not reach low enough to disentangle the seaweed from the hind feet. "Hold on a minute, boys," he called to the men in the boat. "Steady now," and with a mighty dive he disappeared beneath the waves. "He'll be kicked to flinders," shouted one of the soldiers. "Well, let him, if he's fool enough to make such a fuss over a horse. I'd see every one of them soaking on the coral reef before I'd risk my neck for 'em." "Reckon you would, Bill; and the whole boatload of us into the bargain," was the scornful reply of one of his comrades; "but that younker's made of different stuff."

By this time the sergeant had come sputtering to the surface, and calling out: "All right; pull ahead," he rested one dripping arm across the horse's withers, and began to swim beside him.

"Come on into the boat," called one of the men.

"Go ahead; I'm all right," was the reply, and a moment later they had reached the shore and were scrambling up the beach.

"You are a durned fool to get a ducking for that brute," exclaimed the man who had before spoken disparagingly of the sergeant's devotion to his horse.

"Think so?" was the cool reply. "Well, when you've had a friend as long as I've had him for one, whether that friend travels on four feet or two, you'd better stick to him, if he proves as true to you as this one has to me. We've traveled together nine years now, and in all that time we've never been apart a day, and he's helped me out of many a bad fix, I can tell you."

"He must be nigh about twenty year old, aint he?" asked the man with a laugh.

"He is old enough to know a *chump* when he sees one, and to stick to a friend when he's got one; and that's more than some other live critters can do"; and the ser-

geant walked off up the beach to join his troop.

As they walked along, the man who had taken his part in the boat overtook him, and asked: "How long have you had that horse, anyhow, sergeant?"

"Well," he replied, with a queer sort of smile, "I've sort of looked upon him as mine ever since he drew his first breath, for his mother was the only friend I ever had. But I can't say as he's been my legal property more than three years."

"I thought you said you'd had him nine years? He doesn't look more than nine now."

"He was nine ears old the sixth of last April, and, as I said before, we haven't been apart a day. I looked after him till he was four years old, and after that he took care of me. Our part of the world got too hot for us about that time, and one dark night we put out; didn't we, Sonny?" turning to

stroke the great neck which was rapidly drying in the tropical sun. Sonny answered with a soft whinny and poked his nose against the man's face.

His interrogator looked at him questioningly, and the sergeant, in whom we can no longer fail to recognize our friend, Bob Slocum, said: "I was raised down on Cape Cod, and by the meanest old duck that ever gave a boy cuffs for his breakfast, knocks for dinner, and a kick for his supper. Don't remember my parents. Sonny here was the colt of one of his mares; and a beauty she was, too. But when she got too old to work he would have let her starve if Squire Davis hadn't bought her. The squire took pity on her and let her stay in his barn and took care of her till she died.

"When Sonny was two years old Wheeler undertook to break him; but he came nearer killing him instead, for Sonny was nervous and high-spirited, and old Wheeler

had a temper like a very devil. It makes my blood boil to think of the way he handled that colt; I wonder he didn't ruin him, and I believe he would have, if it hadn't been for me. But after they'd had one of their shindies and Sonny was all done up, and old Wheeler was madder than a hornet and had gone up to the house to take out his spunk on his wife, I'd sneak into the pasture, and Sonny would just put for me. He seemed to try to tell me his troubles, and I'd comfort and pet him till he'd get quieted down a bit. I was only fourteen years old then, and he and I stood it a year longer, and then one dark night we took French leave and lit out. I don't know how we ever escaped being caught, or kept from starving, but we did both.

"Sonny lived on grass and I on what I could beg. I knew the country for miles around, and I managed to keep well hidden during the daytime. We came mighty

near being caught lots of times, and had no end of close shaves, I can tell you. But in time I managed to get into New York State, and then we got on pretty well. I could do anything with Sonny, and at last we struck the towpaths. I gave the towmen lifts for my board and a feed for Sonny, and they didn't bother to ask where we had come from or where we were going, so long as we could make ourselves useful.

"By-and-by we found ourselves out in western New York, and it wasn't much further to Ohio; so on we went till the next thing we knew we were clear out in Colorado. Then I got a notion I'd like to go soldiering, and Sonny and I enlisted with the regulars. We've been with them ever since. I was only fifteen, but everyone thought I was seventeen, for I was nearly as tall as I am now, and had been obliged to shift for myself so long that there wasn't much of the boy left in me, I can tell you.

Sonny had got to be a beauty, and I could have sold him a dozen times over, but, you see, he wasn't mine to sell, even if I'd wanted to, which I didn't.

"In two years more I'd managed to scratch together a couple of hundred dollars somehow, and then I went to the colonel and up and told him the whole story, and asked him to send the money to old Wheeler for me. I'd heard the old man say a dozen times that he would sell Sonny for that sum rather than take the risk of being killed while breaking him. And he hadn't broken him, either; I'd done it. That was three years ago. The money went all right and I've got the receipt all safe. Old Wheeler's satisfied, and so am I. I've been with the regiment ever since. We've had some pretty hot times with the Ingins out there; you know that as well as I do, but I've a notion we're in for a hotter one right here than we've seen yet. Sonny has helped me

out of many a tight place, and we've seen some mighty tough times together, but I could count on him every time, and I believe he'd lay down his life for me in a minute. I expect he will save it for me yet. I'd have been a fine one to sit in that boat and watch him go to the bottom, wouldn't I?"

Bob little dreamed how soon Sonny would repay his devotion.

Who would wish to picture the horrors of a battlefield, with its scream of shot, its burst of shell, and the cries of the wounded? Certainly not I, but I cannot complete my story of Sonny without touching the horrible scene.

A charge had been made and many a riderless horse was rushing aimlessly about; for when the trusting creatures no longer felt the guiding hand nor heard the encouraging voice of their masters, chaos seemed indeed to have come again. No one

would have recognized in the terrified animals the well-trained creatures which had gathered for the charge.

Among them was Sonny, rushing he knew not whither. Poor Sonny! No longer clean and shining, but splashed with mud, blackened with powder, and bleeding from a ghastly wound in his shoulder. From some instinct of self-preservation the horses ran to the rear, and he ran with them. But he had not gone far when he was captured by a trooper whose horse had been shot under him, and a moment later he was dashing up the hill and into the thickest of the fight.

Wounds were unnoticed and terror disregarded; no one had time to think of a horse when human beings were struggling to destroy each other in order to settle a disputed question and free a down-trodden race.

Poor Sonny! No one could look into the

horse's mind and there see the anguish he was suffering for the loss of the master whom he had loved and served so faithfully for nine years, and whom he would willingly have followed to his death, if necessary. Whatever trials he had before encountered; whatever suffering he had been compelled to endure, his trusted master had been there to help him bear them. Now in the midst of battle he was as much alone as though he had been abandoned in a wilderness.

Night fell and the carnage ended. Long trains of ambulances were being driven to the rear; wounded men were dragging themselves along the tracks; others were being helped over the rough road by comrades, or were borne on rudely constructed stretchers to the field hospital, where Red Cross nurses and surgeons were doing their utmost to relieve the suffering.

In the field behind them lay those who

needed neither the surgeon's skill nor the nurse's care.

"Here, Jim, give me a lift, will you?" said a soldier at the edge of the field, as he was striving to carry a badly wounded comrade to the rear.

The man addressed was limping along and leading a horse which limped even worse than he himself did.

The first speaker added quickly: "Where did you get that horse? If he aint Slocum's 'Sonny' I'll miss my guess."

"Who's Slocum? I caught the horse running wild on the field. He was wounded then, but I had to get to the front. Here, let's get him up on the horse," he said, speaking of the wounded man.

Together they managed to place him upon the horse's back and started on. They had not gone five hundred yards when Sonny stopped short, and, throwing up his head, gave a loud neigh.

"What's up, old man?" asked the man who was leading him.

"He acts as though he smelt something," said the other.

"Here, come on; we haven't got time for you to smell out your fodder to-night," and he started on.

Sonny went a few steps, stopped again, and tried to turn back; but the man now grew impatient, and, giving him a sounding thwack upon his flank, went on down the hill.

Again and again he held back and strove to get away from them.

Reaching camp they lifted the unconscious burden from Sonny's back and together bore it into one of the tents.

This was Sonny's chance, and he darted away as he used to do when he heard Bob's whistle.

It was a rough road, little better than a trail. But Sonny heeded naught. One

thought filled his mind; one desire dwelt in his heart.

He soon reached the spot where he had first halted, and, plunging into the dense jungle growth, forced his way through the tangle of grass and vines. On and on he went till he came to a spot far remote from the line of battle and the path taken by those returning with the wounded. A moment later he was whinnying over a figure which lay stretched upon the ground. Nothing could have been more pronounced than his delight at finding the object of his search. But his delight was short-lived, for there was no reply to his repeated neighs and soft whinnies. He put his muzzle down to the beloved face and pushed it against the quiet hands, but won no response. Again and again he tried to rouse the quiet figure. Again and again did he strive to win some recognition. It was all in vain, and at last, when all else

failed, he tried to pick up his precious charge with his teeth. But he could find no place where he dared lay hold, for he was far too wise to grasp anything but the clothing. And now Sonny was in dire straits, indeed, for he was unable to move his master and would not leave him.

Night fell, and the dense darkness of the tropics enveloped them. Ere long rain began to fall in torrents, but Sonny did not quit his post. It may have been the rain, or it may have been dear Mother Nature's healing touch, but whatever the cause was, at about midnight the quiet figure moaned slightly and stirred.

Sonny instantly began to lick the white face; the eyes opened, and Bob looked wildly around. "Sonny," he murmured. And Sonny neighed loudly. That was all, but the horse was satisfied. All the rest of the night he stood guard; sometimes licking the hands; sometimes whinnying softly.

Morning came with the suddenness of the tropical daybreak, the sun seeming to spring straight up out of the sea, and with the morning poor Bob's senses returned. He looked at Sonny and said: "Dear old fellow," and tried to rise. But Bob was not likely to rise for some time. "How did you find me?" he asked, as though the horse could answer him. "I wonder how I came here, anyway? The last thing I remember was trying to crawl out of the reek and roar up yonder." Once more he tried to raise himself up, but the exertion was too much for him, and with a pitiful moan he fell back unconscious.

Now was Sonny indeed wretched! He stood the very picture of misery. But finally he seemed to decide upon a line of action, and with a parting caress, he started out of the steaming jungle. Once free of it, he encountered human beings; some wounded, some searching for the wounded;

and to these last he seemed to turn instinctively. He whinnied, and they turned in surprise to see a horse emerging from a spot where no horse was supposed to be.

"Look at that horse!" exclaimed one of them. "Go catch him, Sam."

Sam started forward, but Sonny had no notion of being caught again, and with a wild plunge he dashed back into the jungle.

"What in thunder is taking you in there, you fool beast?" the man called after him. "I wonder if there can be anybody in that stifle," he added. "Hi, Jo, come on; there's something up; I believe that horse's rider is in there."

"Nonsense! How could he get into such a place? I'm not going in."

"Well, there's *something* there, and I'm going to find out what it is, whether you come in or not!" and he started to follow Sonny.

"Then I'll come, too;" and both men started.

Sonny kept well ahead of them, but they followed, and in a moment later they came upon Bob.

"Well, I'll be shot!" exclaimed the second man. "If that don't go clear ahead of anything; that beast has been doing guard duty all night, as sure as guns."

"I knew there was something here," said the first speaker. "I've seen too much of horses out on the plains not to understand some of their ways."

Tenderly they lifted the unconscious figure and bore it back to the camp. No need to lead Sonny now; he would not let the dear master out of his sight, and every few steps he reached out his head to sniff at him. Bob was carried into a tent, and all that was possible to be done for him was done; but it was a long time before he could get about again, and meantime the story of

Sonny's devotion spread throughout the camp, and there was not a man in the regiment who was not willing to give a helping hand when the wounded shoulder needed dressing.

As soon as he was able, Bob's pet was brought to him, and Sonny's joy was pathetic. No words were needed to show it more plainly. As soon as he could be moved Bob was taken to Montauk, and Sonny went with him.

There we must leave them, only adding that Bob recovered completely, and when he was able once more to sit upon Sonny's back and join his comrades in their drill, his regiment held no more popular man or horse.

Bob was promoted for bravery; and when the men—not content that he alone should have the honors—presented a medal to Sonny, upon which was engraved the figure of a horse standing beside his wounded

master, Bob thought more of Sonny's glory than of his own.

But Bob had served his time at soldiering, and not long after received his honorable discharge. He returned to the West, for the free life out there suited him, established himself upon a ranch, and has now settled down to business pursuits with Sonny as first superintendent, chief herder, and joint owner, for in Bob's estimation nothing is too good for Sonny.

HOW NED TOODLES WENT TO COOKING SCHOOL

HOW NED TOODLES WENT TO COOKING SCHOOL

"NO, you must not touch that! No, nor that either. Now mind what I'm saying, and oh, do keep away from that sugar-box! Ned Toodles, how can you act so? I'll never get this dinner ready if you don't keep out of my way, and stop trying to steal things. I'm ashamed of you!" and Denise caught up her rolling pin, which lay upon the small pastry board, and drove off the little scamp who was causing all her troubles. And I am sure you will never guess what that little scamp was, so I will tell you that it was a small Welsh pony.

You will wonder what a pony was doing

in a kitchen, so I will tell you that this was a most unusual kitchen. It was a tiny one, in the playhouse which this little girl's father had had built for her in the pretty grounds of her home, and was fitted up in the most perfect manner with everything a real kitchen ever has. The house had a dining-room too, and upstairs a bedroom and sitting room for the dollies.

That was one half of it; the other was the dearest little stable in the world, and in it lived Ned Toodles, her pony; Tan, her big goat, and Sailor, her Newfoundland dog.

There, too, were kept Ned's and Tan's carriages, harness, etc.

A door led into it from the playhouse, and her pets could come visiting whenever they wished, for they were never tied up, and were too wise to run off.

Denise's mamma had taught her how to cook many things and she spent hours mak-

ing all sorts of dainties, and when they were made she would set her table and Ned, Tan, Sailor, and Beauty Buttons, the black-and-tan, would all take their places, standing up, and have a grand feast.

They dearly loved to come into the kitchen while she cooked, and she had some lively times trying to keep them out of mischief.

The morning of which I am telling she was preparing a grand luncheon, and the pets had all been invited, but were not to come till luncheon was served. They kept sniffing at the closed door, however, and doing all they could to push it open, for they smelt the apple pies which were baking, and their mouths fairly watered.

Denise, enveloped in a gingham apron, with a cooking cap set rakishly upon her curly pate, was flying around, trying to get all ready before her guests arrived. She had just set her pies to cool, and was mak-

ing griddle cakes, of which one must have eaten about a hundred before being satisfied, to judge by their size, when door leading out of the kitchen was pushed open and in walked Ned. He had found a way.

"Oh, dear!" she cried, "now you will lead me a life of it till you get your luncheon, won't you?"

True enough. To steal an apple from the basket beside the table was only a second's work, and that gone he turned his attention to the pies. Denise flew after him and rescued first the pies and then the little plate of toast, and at last caught up her rolling-pin and drove him off with that.

He gave a defiant bounce and ran into the dining room.

"Well, do go in there!" she cried; "there isn't a single thing on the table to eat yet, unless you eat the plates, and I don't believe even you will want those," and she put the sugar-box and everything else out of

sight. Then, placing her viands upon her tiny tray, she carried them into the dining room, meanwhile keeping one eye on Ned.

But more than one eye was required to watch that little black imp, as Denise soon found, for he bobbed about like a monkey, and behaved in altogether a disgraceful manner for an invited guest. At last she became indignant and said:

"I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself to act so! You've just *got* to wait till it is served, and then you may all come, and——oh, dear! here they all come this minute, and it's all because you would come before the time you were told to," and the distracted little hostess looked nearly desperate as three more of her four-footed guests appeared before the hours named in their invitations.

"Sailor, charge!" "Beauty, lie down at once!" and "Tan, come here!" were the orders quickly issued, "and you," turning

to Ned, with a look calculated to strike terror to his heart, "go straight back to the kitchen! You are not fit to come to the table, and there isn't a single thing left in there for you to eat."

But alas! she had entirely forgotten the Saratoga potatoes, which were still merrily sizzling in the tiny frying-pan.

With a final defiant jump Ned skipped through the door, and, literally "following his nose," made straight for the little stove.

To make a dive for the potatoes, whose tempting odor had proved too much for him, was only a second's work, and then came the climax.

A squeal, a wild leap, and the hot morsel was dropped as the scamp flew across the kitchen and out of the door, upsetting the cooking-table and everything else in his way, to rush across the lawn as though pursued by a wild beast.

With Tan and the dogs close upon her

heels, Denise rushed into the kitchen and beheld the wreck.

One glance at the frying-pan, now calmly reposing in the middle of the floor, explained all.

And I wish to add that ever after Ned stood in very wholesome awe of that little stove, and would walk a long way around the kitchen in order to avoid going near it.

OLD NICK'S CHRISTMAS

OLD NICK'S CHRISTMAS

CHAPTER I

"WHERE IS OLD NICK?"

"GOOD-BY!" "Good-by!" "Hope you'll have a good time!" "Merry Christmas beforehand!" "Happy New Year, too!" "Hope you'll get *loads* of pretty things, and no end of goodies which will bear transportation!" cried a dozen or more girls as they bade good-by to one of their schoolmates just leaving for her Christmas holidays.

Isabel Townsend was truly popular, not only with her schoolmates, but with teachers also. A bright, happy girl who went through life with a laugh and a song,

and yet had a strong, noble character, quick to detect sham of any sort, and cordially detest it. She had a long journey before her, and was starting off earlier than the other girls; hence her "send-off."

Forty-eight hours later the train deposited her at a small station, about fifteen miles from the city of New York, where her father awaited her.

He was a tall, handsome man, who had once enjoyed an independent income, but Wall Street had proved to him, as to many another, anything but "a land of promise." Still, enough had been saved from the wreck to enable him to live upon the farm which had been his wife's dower, and even to enjoy some luxuries; but he was a disappointed man, and seemed to have left his faith in his fellow-men behind him in the New York Stock Exchange. He rarely left his farm, where he found occupation in his books and in his live stock, in which he took just pride.

It was a pretty place, nestling among the Jersey hills, and as quiet and secluded as though hundreds of miles from the great city pulsating with life and daily drawing innumerable human beings into the maelstrom where hopes and schemes were lost forever.

"Well, daughter, how are you? Glad to see you home again," was Mr. Townsend's greeting, as he helped Isabel into the cutter and tucked the robes carefully about her.

"It's awfully nice to be home, too; and how is mamma?" she asked, as she nestled close to his side when he had taken his seat beside her.

"Mamma is well and very anxious to have you home. I'm glad to see you looking so well, and that you have decided, after all, to wear your Christmas present beforehand," he said, as a faint smile overspread his fine face, and he picked up one of the

tails of the handsome fur collar Isabel wore.

"Yes, I just *couldn't* wait for the day to come. How good you were to send me such a beauty, and to make it so easy for me to do exactly what I was dying to do all the time, by telling me to wear the furs right off and not to wait for Christmas Day." While she spoke she stroked her pretty collar and muff, and regarded them with very genuine pride.

"Why did you get such expensive ones, daddy?" she continued. "I should have been just as pleased with a simpler style," and she looked up with her bonny face alive with happiness.

"I've only one daughter," was the brief response.

"Which horse is this, papa? I think I've never seen him before; have I?"

"I think not. He is one of Nancy's colts, and was broken only this fall. He is

none too reliable yet; but I use him a great deal and have great expectations of him."

As though to give Mr. Townsend a hint of what his expectations might realize, the frisky beast at that moment elected to put the laws of gravity to a crucial test. With one bound he leaped into the air, struck out wildly, plunged forward, and took about three minutes to recover his equilibrium, evidently convinced that, so far as history has recorded, Pegasus was not the only horse capable of flying through space.

"What a crazy thing he is!" exclaimed Isabel. "Why didn't you bring Old Nick? Dear old fellow! How I want to see him! Is he all right?"

"I think so, I think so," said her father hurriedly. Then Mr. Townsend became much occupied with the colt, and a few moments later home was reached, where, amid

warm greetings, Old Nick was, for a time, forgotten.

A few hours later Isabel came in from the stables, where she had been on a tour of inspection, with blank dismay pictured upon her face.

"Daddy," she cried, bursting into the room, "where is Old Nick? The men say that he is sold, but I won't believe them. He isn't, is he?" and her voice was half-choked in sobs.

Mr. Townsend looked up from his desk, and a peculiar expression crept into his face—an expression partly of defiance, partly of self-assertion, partly of shame—but he made no answer. Isabel came toward him as one who doubted her senses, and laying a hand on each of his shoulders peered into his face, with doubt and astonishment on her own.

"Papa, of course you wouldn't sell Old Nick! Why, he has been mine as long

as I can remember, and next to you and mamma, I love him better than anything in the world. Where *is* he? Please tell me."

"Isabel, listen to me. You are no longer a child. You are nearly seventeen years old, and you ought to be capable of looking upon things from a practical standpoint. Yes, Nick is sold. I had an excellent offer from a man who was going through the country about six weeks ago, buying up horses. Nick is seventeen years old if he is a day, and such a chance could never be expected again. Mamma wanted to send you a set of furs for Christmas, and the means to purchase them had literally walked to our door. The seventy-five dollars paid for Nick bought them, and you, certainly, should be the last to complain."

Mr. Townsend picked up his pen as though the matter were dismissed forever. But he little knows his daughter. Her hands

fell from his shoulders and she slowly backed away from him, while into her big gray eyes came a look which told of a resolve born of an outraged spirit.

CHAPTER II

"I WANT TO BUY OLD NICK."

IF Henry Townsend had expected his daughter "to make a fuss," he was more than agreeably disappointed. She said not one word, but turned and left the room.

Going straight to her own sanctum, she took the set of beautiful furs which poor Old Nick's money had bought, put them carefully into her drawer, and locked it. Then, placing the key in her pocket, she threw a shawl about her and started for the stable, where Hiram Bents, the foreman, was holding a monologue on the subject of "durned fool men who would sell their next o' kin, if they could get enough cash for 'em, never mind if they bruck the purtiest leetle heart that went a pit-a-pat!"

"Hiram, did you see Nick sold?"

"I reckon I did, missie."

"Who bought him?"

"An old duffer what was goin' about tryin' to git a three-hundred-dollar critter fer one hundred."

"Where did he take Nick?"

"Down ter the city ter some horse exchange, where I'll bet a fiver he sold him fer twict what he give fer him."

"Do you know the man's name?"

"Guess I kin git it. He left his cyard fer the boss, and said he'd call round agin when he had anythin' likely he wanted fer ter sell," and Hiram gave an indignant snort, as he took a card from a shelf above his head.

"Here yer be, missie."

Isabel took the card and read:

"Jacob Vedder, Dealer in Horses. East Twenty-fifth Street, New York."

"Thanks, Hiram. I'll keep this, please."

"Ye're welcome. I don't want ter tech the thing; seems like it's a scrap o' Old Nick's hide."

Isabel went back to her room, and, locking the door, opened her trunk. Down in the bottom was a jewel box, from which she took a small leather case containing a ring of curious design. The ring itself was of dull gold, holding an uncut stone. It had been sent to her when she was a mere child by an uncle in India. Excepting to mention that the stone was valuable, he had said but little about it, and she had kept it more as a curiosity than for any supposed intrinsic value.

It was still three days to Christmas and bitter cold. Weather-wise folk predicted a snowstorm within forty-eight hours.

"Mamma, dear, can you spare me to-morrow? I want to go to the city for the day," said Isabel, as she came into the pleasant

sitting room and placed her arm caressingly about her mother's shoulders.

"Spare you, sweetheart? I'll try. What is the demand—Christmas shopping?" asked her mother, drawing Isabel's hand to her lips and kissing it softly.

"Oh, lots of things! May I go?"

"Certainly, dear."

It was a determined young spirit which stepped into the big city next morning and, making her way to one of the large jewelry stores uptown, asked to see the proprietor. Ushered into his private office, she lost not a moment in coming straight to the point, and said to him:

"I have something I wish to sell."

"Yes? May I inquire what it is?"

"It is a ring."

A smile crept into the jeweler's eyes.

"Not a rarity; do you think so?"

"That I do not know, and I wish you to decide. I have been told that it is very val-

uable. It was sent to me from India by my uncle."

"Have you shown it to anyone else?"

"No; but I am very anxious to sell it. Will you *please* tell me what you will give me for it?"

The proprietor looked not a little surprised.

"We should have to consider it, my dear young lady, and within a reasonable time give our decision."

"But I can't wait. I must sell it to-day—right off," said the girl impulsively.

"Such a thing would be unheard of. But I will examine it."

"But why can't you decide right now? It wouldn't take you very long, I'm sure, and it's *so* important!"

"The Christmas shopping, you mean?" for there were girls in his own family, and he knew the demands of Christmas.

"Christmas shopping!" she exclaimed with fine scorn. "Do you suppose I am trying to get money for Christmas shopping? I want to buy Old Nick."

"Old Nick!" he repeated in amazement. "You're the first person I've ever met who thought seriously of buying his Satanic Majesty and set about obtaining money to do it."

"Oh, dear me! Please be serious, for really it is all too dreadful to laugh about," and tears came into the pretty gray eyes.

"My dear young lady," said the jeweler kindly, for he saw how deeply in earnest she was, and he was touched by the pathetic tone in the girlish voice, "I beg your pardon for smiling, and will be glad to learn the circumstances, if you are willing to tell them."

Although nearly seventeen, Isabel was still in many respects a child, and in a mo-

ment was pouring out the story of her love for Old Nick, and her determination to buy him back. It was all told very simply, yet with a child's dramatic touch, and her listener quickly detected her wish to shield her father from censure, even though he justly deserved it. When she had finished, he looked into the flushed face and shining eyes, as she asked:

"Can you wait an hour or so? I am in need of a certain stone, and it is just possible that the one you have may fill the want. You say it is a ruby?"

"Yes, it is a ruby," replied Isabel, as she took the ring from her purse and handed it to him. "I will wait as long as you wish," and she stepped into the outer shop.

In a little more than an hour she was called into the private office again. With a beating heart she entered. The jeweler rose from his chair as he saw her.

"Well, have you come to learn Old Nick's

fate?" he asked kindly. "I am happy to say that you have solved half the problem, anyway, for the stone is very beautiful, and I am willing to give you two hundred dollars for it. Do you accept my terms?"

"Two hundred dollars! Why, Old Nick was sold for less than one hundred. But one would buy him back; don't you think so?"

It is to the man's credit that he suppressed a smile as he answered very seriously:

"Ah, but the dealer will never be willing to sell him without making a good profit. You'd better take the two hundred; the ring is fully worth it."

"Well, perhaps I would better," she said simply, "I should be sorry not to have enough," and she looked up into the big man's face as confidingly as though she were seven instead of seventeen.

"I'm sure you would be; so take this and

be careful of it. It is a good deal of money to look after."

"I'll be very careful, and I am *so* much obliged to you." Her small, gloved hand was impulsively offered.

"Good-by, little lady, and accept my best wishes for your success."

CHAPTER III

"POOR OLD NICK!"

IT was a short walk from the jeweler's to the address given upon the horse-dealer's card, and with heart beating high with hope Isabel quickly made her way there.

But when the dealer had bought Nick he had known what he was about. Very little "doctoring" was required to bring the still handsome old horse up to "market shape" and palm him off for a much younger animal than he was. So it was no wonder that ere a week had passed dear Old Nick, who had never known a hard day's work in all his happy life, and whose big, arching neck had never drawn anything heavier than a surrey, should find it burdened with a

heavy, ill-fitting collar, and himself harnessed to a city express wagon, while the dealer patted his pocket, congratulating himself that in a few days he had been able to make a profit of fifty dollars. Accustomed all his life to kind treatment and the best of care, Nick could not comprehend anything different; and the look of surprise which came into the big, beautiful eyes when his funny little kittenish overtures to play or to be petted were met with harsh words or a blow was truly a revelation. When Isabel started upon her quest, he had been hard at work for over a month, and it had told upon the old horse.

Under ordinary conditions a local city express usually keeps its horses busy, but when the Christmas rush begins it means early and late hours for horse and driver, meals snatched when and where they can be, and rushing to and fro in storm and shine.

It is really no wonder that the men become worn out and impatient, and too often the poor horses must suffer in consequence.

From the dealer, a good-natured German, Isabel learned who had become Nick's owner and that his office was in Forty-second Street, so off she started once more. The day was growing bitter cold, and the light snowfall during the previous night had frozen upon the streets and walks, making it exceedingly uncomfortable for pedestrians, whether they traveled upon two feet or four. The sun shone brightly, however, and the spirit of Christmas-tide seemed to be abroad; for as the people slipped and slid along they laughed at one another's mishaps.

But for the poor horses it was a different matter. Those sharp-shod managed well enough, but those with smooth shoes were utterly wretched, and, while striving to keep their equilibrium, struggled along,

straining and pulling, utterly exhausted by the double effort.

Turning into Fifth Avenue, Isabel started off at a brisk pace, and was soon making good time up the steep grade which lies between Thirtieth and Fortieth Streets. The avenue was crowded with vehicles of every sort, from the elegantly appointed equipages of the wealthy, with their prancing, beautiful horses, to the humble hawkers' carts, yet all seemed imbued with the Christmas cheer. As she neared Thirty-third Street, an express wagon drove away from the Waldorf, the man had come running from the hotel to spring upon his wagon and whip up his horse with the lack of common sense so often displayed. It is a pity that such people cannot be placed between the shafts for a short time. The experience would prove a wholesome one, I fancy, and give them a practical demonstration of the impossibility of moving heavy

weights suddenly without endangering some organ of the body.

The horse sprang forward, slipped, nearly fell, and was brought to a realizing sense of his duty by another jerk and a lash. Then, with a mighty effort, he started quickly up the hill with his heavily laden wagon, his poor, smooth-shod feet slipping over the icy pavement in a manner which threatened every moment to bring him down.

It had all happened in less time than it has taken to tell it, but love has keen sight, and with a cry of "Nick! Oh, dear Old Nick!" Isabel forgetful of everybody and everything, started up the avenue like a deer. She had not far to run, for at Thirty-sixth Street the climax was reached and Nick fell.

As she reached him a crowd had surrounded the prone horse. One man sat calmly on the animal's head, another was

unhooking the traces, another the tug-straps, while the driver was indulging in language not set down in the Ten Commandments. The poor horse, utterly exhausted by his double exertions, lay as still as though the hard, icy pavement were a blissful spot. Just as the last strap was released and the men stepped aside, Isabel came to him, and crying out, "Nick! Dear, dear Nick!" went close to the edge of the curb and stretched out her hands toward him. God had not given him human speech, but if ever a dumb beast spoke Old Nick did then; for at the sound of the beloved voice the poor head was raised quickly, and as joyous a neigh as ever greeted friend rang out upon the frosty air.

As Isabel spoke the driver approached her, and touching his cap respectfully, said:

"Do you know that horse, miss?"

Isabel looked quickly up, and her heart gave a joyous bound as she said:

"Yes, oh, yes! But please, please don't harness him to that dreadful wagon again. He was mine once, and I want to buy him back."

"Buy him back?" incredulously.

"Yes, yes. I truly do! Where can I talk to you?"

"Will you step into this store, miss, and I'll see what I can do for you."

"Thank you *so* much. But let me touch Nick first."

No need to ask it. The horse was now upon his feet, and had made straight for the sidewalk, where two arms were waiting to gather the big head, which snuggled into them as a child might have done.

Never mind cold and ice now! Old Nick had no more to wish for, and would have been willing to stand there for hours just to hear the beloved voice and feel the stroke of the dear hands.

Thanks to the courtesy of the proprietor

of the store in which Isabel soon took refuge, matters were settled between the expressman and herself, and, to judge from the expression of both faces, to their mutual satisfaction. As the expressman left the store he was conscious of a good day's profit in the hundred and fifty dollars paid him for Old Nick; and when Nick was given into his charge to be looked after until he could be taken to the farm, Isabel felt that her first business transaction had been a successful one.

CHAPTER IV

OLD NICK'S HOME-COMING

NEXT arose the question of getting Nick home, but Isabel had gone too far to retreat, nor did such a thought occur to her. Home Nick must go, and home he was going, and *she* was to get him there. There were quick wits in that pretty head, and the plans were soon laid.

Another journey to town, ostensibly to finish the previous day's shopping; a suit case, presumably to bring the parcels home in; a secret conference with the faithful Hiram, who, as she tripped away from the stable, slapped his thigh and ejaculated: "Wal, I be gol twisted ef she don't beat the

band!" and Old Nick's saddle and bridle were on their way to the city.

There was still sufficient money for her needs, and by one o'clock the following day a young lady might have been seen mounting a big bay horse in front of the Margaret Louisa Home. The horse was either too happy or too frisky to know what he was about, for he kept turning his head around to pull at the girl's habit, her shoe—in short, he was acting like a spoilt child.

At the horse's head a stableman stood, smiling in a very satisfied manner, as if he knew a pleasant Christmas secret. Nick's late owner, with a new horse filling Nick's place, drove up, touched his hat to the girl as he asked, "Is your bag inside, miss?" and a moment later the suit case, containing Isabel's street clothing, was speeding upon its homeward way.

"Thank you so much for your kindness," she said to the man who had brought Nick

from the expressman's stable, "and please take this for your children, if you have any. I hope they will be as happy as I am." And with a smile which the man remembered for many a long day she slipped a coin into his hand, gathered up her reins, and started.

Nick's burden seemed to have an intoxicating effect upon him—or, perhaps, the spirit of Christmas had been fastened upon his feet with his new shoes—for he acted altogether foolishly. But a wise little horsewoman rode him, and knowing the miles to be traveled over snowy roads, she took good care of her mount.

She had barely reached the Fort Lee ferry when the threatened storm began and snowflakes fell rapidly. The fifteen miles to be traveled after she reached the Jersey shore would have been a pleasant jaunt under favorable conditions, but in a driving snowstorm, with the thermometer far below freezing point, they were no joke; and even

though joy had put new life into Nick, Isabel realized that reserve strength was wanting after the hard work of the past weeks.

More than one person turned to regard the pretty young girl with a questioning look as she rode up with her hair, hat, and habit powdered with snowflakes. Ten of the miles had been told off, and although doing bravely, Old Nick showed signs of great fatigue, while his brave little rider was nearly perishing from cold. The snow was falling fast and the short winter day drawing to its close. It would have been impossible to travel rapidly, had Nick been young and fresh; and although he started forward from time to time, as home drew nearer and he became familiar with the road, he soon lagged again, and his labored breathing told plainly of exhaustion.

The last turn had been made, and a straight stretch of road lay before him, with home almost in sight. He threw up

his head, gave a loud neigh, stumbled, and nearly fell over something hidden by the snow. Isabel slipped from the saddle and stood knee-deep in the drifts.

"Why, Nick, dear, how did it happen?" she cried, stroking his steaming neck. But Nick was sniffing about in the snow with queer, frightened snorts.

Isabel gave a little cry, and brushing aside the snow struck a man's garments. A moment later she was supporting her father's unconscious form in her arms.

A bad bruise upon his temple, a broken arm, a whip lying near him told the story. Quickly taking a card from her pocket-book, she wrote upon it: "Papa is at the four corners injured. Send at once. Isabel," and fastened the message to Nick's head-stall. Then, tying the reins securely to the pommel of the saddle, she gave Nick a sharp slap upon his flank, and cried:

"Home, Nick! Home!"

A dumb beast was then permitted to demonstrate the teachings of Him whose birthday eve it was and to return good for evil. With a wild toss of his head, Nick plunged forward, and was soon lost in the gloom, but Isabel heard the thud, thud of his fleeing feet long after he had disappeared.

Two hours later Mr. Townsend was being tenderly cared for by wife and daughter, the wretched colt which had caused the mishap was caught and returned to the stable, and Nick—dear, faithful Old Nick—was in Hiram's care—Hiram, who rubbed him down until each separate hair was as dry as a bone, and who was now standing by while Nick enjoyed a steaming bran mash, and talking to him as to a twin brother.

"Aint she a trump, Nick? I tell ye, old man, ye needn't never have no fears thet ye'll leave *this* place agin till ye're toted out ter yer last beddin' down. No, siree; not

while thet leetle girl owns yer. Do yer believe me, sonny?"

Nick evidently did believe it, for he promptly put his mark thereto by raising a very slobbery muzzle and rubbing it against Hiram's sleeve.

HOW NED TOODLES TOLD TIME

HOW NED TOODLES TOLD TIME

"DENISE, darling, are you upstairs?" called Aunt Helen, at the foot of the playhouse stairs.

"Yes, auntie; do you want me?"

"Only to know whether you have seen John anywhere about, dear."

"I think he has gone with Sunshine and Flash to the blacksmith's. I saw him lead them away about half an hour ago."

"Dear me, that is too bad, for we need him very much."

"What is it, auntie? Can I do it for you?"

"Why, the grocer has just delivered the morning's order, but has forgotten to bring

the half barrel of sugar ordered, and cook is nearly beside herself, for she is in the midst of her jelly-making and needs the sugar very much."

"Oh! let me go after it. It will be lots of fun."

Aunt Helen laughed as she gave her consent, and a moment later Denise had let down the bars of the day stall and was dragging Ned Toodles out by his forelock, much to that animal's disgust, for it was nearly twelve o'clock, and that meant dinner time for him.

It took her only a jiffy to whisk his harness on him, and a few moments later she rattled out of the playhouse, down the driveway, and through the gate.

It was not more than a mile to the village, but that mile tried Denise's patience.

Ned bounced and jerked along, first upon one side of the road and then upon the other,

in order to show his disapproval at being sent upon an errand just at dinner time.

"I certainly think I shall do something dreadful to you, if you don't behave yourself. What makes you act so, anyway?" she cried, as she drew up his rein and cracked her whip threateningly. "I'd be ashamed of myself to make such a fuss just because I thought my dinner was going to be half an hour late," she continued, in a scathing tone.

A fig cared Ned for anybody's opinion, and as Denise came up to the store at which she had to stop and turned around so that Ned was headed toward home, he gave his head a saucy wag, as though to say:

"Perhaps some people had better reserve their opinions until they are asked."

Tie-strap in hand, Denise hopped out of the wagon, but just as she was about to tie Ned, for she had very pronounced misgiv-

ings of his sense of honor, the proprietor of the store slipped out to say:

"I know what you have come for, Miss Denise, but we will send it at once."

"I will take it with me in the back of my wagon, Mr. Groves, thank you."

"Very well. I'll send it right out." Denise stepped back into the wagon to wait, and then came the beginning of Ned's humiliation. Dong! rang out the bell of the town clock. Dong! dong! until twelve strokes of the bell had sounded. Ned knew a great deal, and he must also have known how to count, for as the last stroke rung out he began to fidget. "Now you are up to some new prank," said Denise to herself, "and I won't say one word, but will see what you will do." So she let the reins hang loose and kept perfectly still.

Ned's blinders prevented him from seeing her, but one ear was laid back to listen.

Denise sat as silent as the whip socket.

First a sidling step away from the curb-stone; then another. Still no restraint from the wagon. Surely Denise must have gone into that store, thought Ned.

Two or three more steps took him well into the middle of the road, and that road led home and to dinner.

Still it would be wiser to listen again, and a knowing pair of ears were prepared to catch the faintest sound from the wagon.

But no sound came, although Denise was nearly convulsed with laughter.

Surely things were progressing famously, and when dinner was to be had so easily why not go after it? And off my laddie started, at a brisk pace.

But walking was slow work. Not a vehicle was in sight, so very shortly Master Ned was trotting along at a fine rate.

"Dear me! trotting is a very common-

place manner of getting over the ground. Can't we improve on it?" Surely, and a moment later the little villain was bounding along like a deer, the wagon jerking and rattling behind him.

By this time Denise thought the joke had gone far enough, and so said in her most sarcastic tone:

"Well, sir, how much further do you inten to run?"

But the effect was astounding. With one final bound Ned stopped short.

Snap went the breeching straps, and over went Denise, landing straight across the dashboard, with her hands spread out upon Ned's fat haunches, where she could only lie and laugh. When she had laughed till she couldn't laugh any more, she scrambled out, and, walking around to Ned's head, peeped over the blinders, and beheld a very subdued little horse.

"Well, sir, when I've fixed up your har-

ness, and gotten you into some sort of shape again, we'll go back for the sugar, if you please, and it would serve you just exactly right if you did not get one bit of dinner until two o'clock instead of one."

THE END

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